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This paper examines the intelligence capabilities in the Army of the Potomac under the command of General McClellan in 1861 and ends in 1863 while the army is under the command of General Meade. Several innovations in intelligence took place during this time period most notably under McClelland and Hooker. McClellan developed the army's first professional spy network under the leadership of Alan Pinkerton. General Hooker took this a step further and organized the army's first all source analysis organization in the form of the Bureau of Military Information (BMI). The innovations in the field of intelligence that were developed during this time period were keys to improving the overall professionalism of the Union Army. However, these improvements were not often translated into successes on the battlefield. The greatest tactical success of the period, General Meade at Gettysburg, took place without any further improvements to the intelligence system that General Hooker established.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

INTELLIGENCE IN THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC: 1861-1863

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Preface

This paper began as an attempt to force myself to learn more about the American Civil War. I chose intelligence as a subject in order to draw some insight into intelligence issues in conventional conflicts. Despite the tremendous technological leaps forward in the years since the Civil War, the principles of intelligence operations remain largely unchanged.

I would like to thank my wife and daughter for their patience during the drafting of this paper; Dr. McKenna for his clear guidance and help with choosing a topic; Dr. Gordon for telling me how well I write and Dr Cobb for telling me how poorly I write.

Executive Summary

Title: Intelligence in the Army of the Potomac: 1861-1863

Author: Major Thomas Browne, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: Although intelligence capabilities in the Union's Army of the Potomac improved dramatically between 1861 and 1863, those improvements were not often translated into success on the battlefield.

Discussion: This paper begins with an examination of intelligence capabilities in the Army of the Potomac under the command of General McClellan in 1861 and ends in 1863 while the army was under the command of General Meade. Several innovations in intelligence took place during this time period, most notably under McClellan and Hooker. McClellan developed the army's first professional spy network under the leadership of Alan Pinkerton. General Hooker took this a step further and organized the army's first all source analysis organization in the form of the Bureau of Military Information (BMI).

Conclusion: The innovations in the field of intelligence that were developed during this time period were keys to improving the overall professionalism of the Union Army. However, these improvements were not often translated into successes on the battlefield. The greatest tactical success of the period, General Meade at Gettysburg, took place without any further improvements to the intelligence system that General Hooker established. The single greatest intelligence innovation of the war, the creation of the BMI, was not enough of an improvement to prevent the disaster that befell Hooker and the Army of the Potomac at Chancellorsville.

Introduction

The American Civil War provides contemporary observers with ample opportunities to study several aspects of every warfighting function. The focus of this paper is on intelligence in the Civil War, particularly in the Army of the Potomac between 1861 and 1863. These dates were chosen because they provide the best examples of innovations in intelligence operations throughout the entire war. The period examined in this paper covers several campaigns, from the Peninsula Campaign under McClellan to the Gettysburg Campaign under Meade.

Although General McClellan is typically remembered for his inflated enemy strength numbers, he also made some lasting contributions to the field of intelligence. General Meade, whose legacy is that of the victor of Gettysburg, inherited a solidly functioning intelligence apparatus when he assumed command. In between were two leaders who made remarkably distinct contributions to the development of battlefield intelligence. General Burnside was distinct for his lack of innovation and General Hooker for the extraordinary improvements that he made in a relatively short period of time.

While the period studied in this paper includes four commanders in the Army of the Potomac, the majority of the attention of the paper is on the two commanders who contributed most to the development of intelligence, McClellan and Hooker. The other two made less significant contributions and as such are not accorded as much space in this paper. The author contends that although intelligence capabilities in the Union's Army of the Potomac improved dramatically between 1861 and 1863, those improvements were not often translated into success on the battlefield.

Background

Intelligence was not in itself an innovation of the American military during the Civil War. Intelligence operations were routinely carried out by George Washington and the Continental Army during the American Revolution[1] and Sun Tzu had written extensively on the importance of intelligence nearly two thousand years prior to the Civil War[2]. Despite this long and well documented heritage, it seems as though at times, the Union Army was reinventing the intelligence wheel with each new commander who took over the Army of the Potomac. A key point to mention here is that the American military at the time of the Civil War did not have any formal training in the field of intelligence. Everything a Civil War Union commander knew about intelligence was learned through trial and error and what he personally learned on the battlefield or studied on his own. Formal training in military intelligence was years in the offing.[3]

A basic review of military intelligence is necessary before going forward in order to provide some necessary background for the construct of this paper. "Intelligence" was not even a word in the professional vocabulary of the American military at the time of the Civil War. The word existed, but not with the same connotations that it has today.[4] The distinction between information and intelligence is one that exists today.[5] As intelligence was not even in the lexicon of Civil War commanders, the words information and intelligence are used interchangeably throughout the rest of this paper.

The basic stages of the intelligence cycle today were present in the Civil War era, they were just not studied and understood as well as they currently are. The intelligence cycle consists of six basic categories: planning and direction, collection, processing and exploitation, production (analysis[6]), dissemination and utilization. [7]To some degree, all elements of this cycle were conducted in the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War. Those that are looked at in

more detail in this paper include collections, analysis (under the intelligence cycle stage of production), and utilization.

To be of value, intelligence requires certain characteristics. In the simplest terms, all quality intelligence is timely, relevant, accurate and predictive.[8] The quality of these four characteristics varied dramatically throughout the war. Predicting enemy actions was one area that was never really achieved in the Civil War. If a commander received intelligence that was timely, relevant, and accurate, he had about all that he could hope for at the time.

One of the keys to making intelligence valuable is how it is integrated with operations. The best intelligence in the world, without being effectively integrated into operations, is analogous to a tree falling in the forest with no one around to hear it. This aspect of intelligence is easy to talk about, but invariably extremely challenging to implement. A breakdown at any point in the intelligence cycle has the potential to derail the intelligence – operations link. The lack of any formal intelligence training at the time of the Civil War meant that a commander's success or failure in integrating intelligence into his operations depended entirely on his own background and views. The adage that intelligence drives operations was as true then as it is today. It is also true that a large percentage of their intelligence was derived from their own operations. Therefore operations also drove intelligence.

Intelligence supports the commander in several ways, including support to targeting, support to combat assessment (battle damage assessment – estimates of enemy casualties), support to the commander's estimate of the situation, aiding in situation development, providing indications and warning, and support to force protection.[9] While these terms are part of a modern day intelligence framework, each of them was present and functioning to one degree or another at the time of the Civil War.

Collections

Several methods were available to commanders in the Army of the Potomac for collecting intelligence. Cavalry, scouts and spies, aerial observation from balloons, signals intercepts, interrogations, and open source (enemy newspapers) were all potential techniques and sources for gathering information. Of these, the least productive method was reading the enemy newspapers.[10] While bits of information could occasionally be gleaned from newspapers, they were the least time sensitive form of information and, as such, rarely provided significant information.

The cavalry was a branch of the army that had great potential for intelligence collection. Under McClellan, the cavalry was used both for collection and offensive raids. The dilemma a commander faced was that if he sent a majority of his cavalry on raiding operations, they were not available for screening and reporting on enemy locations. This delicate balance required commanders to choose carefully how they intended to use this precious asset during combat operations. McClellan needed information during the Peninsula Campaign on both the enemy and the terrain.

> "In the commencement of the movement from Fort Monroe serious difficulties were encountered from the want of precise topographical information as to the country, in advance. Correct local maps were not to be found, and the country, though known in its general feature, we found to be inaccurately described in essential particulars in the only maps and geographical memories or papers to which access could be had. Erroneous courses to streams and roads were frequently given, and no dependence could be placed on the information thus derived. This difficulty has been found to exist with respect to most portions of the State of Virginia through which my military operations have extended. Reconnaissance, frequently under fire, proved the only trustworthy sources of information."[11]

One of the keys to using cavalry successfully for collection was timing. For the information they collected to be of value, they needed ample time to leave friendly lines, travel

to where they could collect information on the enemy and then return to friendly lines to report what they had found. This time consuming cycle could take as long as several weeks depending on the distances needed for travel. In the Peninsula Campaign, McClellan frequently used his cavalry for locating enemy positions and identifying routes;[12] however, at the battle of Antietam, he had very little information from his cavalry.[13]

How the cavalry was organized could have a significant effect on their value in intelligence collection. Under McClellan, the cavalry were organized into divisions and worked directly for the corps commanders. While this method provided the corps commanders with their own organic collection assets, it denied that asset to the Army commander. One of Hooker's first decisions as commander when he took over the army following the battle of Fredericksburg was to consolidate the cavalry into its own independent corps, reporting directly to the army headquarters.[14] While this reorganization provided Hooker with an extremely capable asset under his direct control, he used them primarily for raid operations and he paid the price for it at Chancellorsville.

The ability of cavalry units to collect information on the enemy meant nothing if they did not have the skills to report that information accurately. Reporting was a skill that varied tremendously from commander to commander. The experiences of two Union cavalry commanders highlight the value of timely and accurate reporting. Alfred Pleasonton was notoriously inaccurate in his reports and John Buford was perhaps the best the Union army ever had. The disparity between their capabilities was clearly evident at Gettysburg where Buford's timely reporting potentially saved the Union army from catastrophe. [15] Pleasonton on the other hand, continuously sent inaccurate and misleading reports during several battles and severely limited the commander's ability to make decisions based on his reporting.[16]

In addition to gathering information on enemy locations and activity, cavalry were used extensively under McClellan and Hooker for terrain analysis. They were used for locating ford sites along rivers, finding the best routes for the infantry to follow, and identifying potential engagement areas prior to an anticipated battle. McClellan struggled with the terrain analysis in the Peninsula Campaign and again at Antietam. Burnside did little of it at Fredericksburg and Hooker was limited due to the majority of the cavalry being gone with Stoneman on the raid south of Chancellorsville. The best example of good terrain analysis throughout this period was Buford at Gettysburg where his key understanding of terrain allowed Meade to engage Lee from an advantageous position.[17]

The cavalry was also used to gather prisoners and bring them back to friendly lines for interrogation. One drawback to this technique was that the cavalry were not trained in interrogations themselves. They needed to bring any prisoners they collected back to their headquarters where they could be properly interrogated by trained personnel.

Scouts and spies were commonly used throughout the Civil War by both the Confederate and Union forces. Under McClellan, their operations were coordinated by Alan Pinkerton. Pinkerton joined McClellan in the Army of the Potomac because of their relationship in Chicago prior to the war. Pinkerton ran a detective agency prior to the war and he ran his intelligence operations the same way as his detective agency. He worked directly for General McClellan and when McClellan left the army, so did Pinkerton. His operations consisted mainly of employing a small number of spies who operated in the vicinity of Richmond and gathered what would be considered strategic intelligence. He never attempted to develop information of a more tactical nature, such as the exact locations of enemy units.[18]

Pinkerton and McClellan are frequently remembered for the vastly exaggerated enemy strength reports that they produced on the Peninsula and Antietam Campaigns. Their estimates of enemy numbers were often inflated by over 100 percent. These inflated numbers were used by McClellan to justify inaction and demands for more troops. What has been debated for the past 150 years was whether or not McClellan in fact knew that he was receiving exaggerated numbers.[19] While that fact is still debated, what is not debatable is that the numbers were wrong. Even if they had been correct, enemy strength reports by themselves were not a detailed enough picture of the enemy for an army commander to make decisions. McClellan needed to know exactly where the enemy was and this is information that Pinkerton's spies were rarely able to provide him in a timely manner.

The spy network utilized by Hooker was more effective at painting a clear picture of the enemy. He still received strategic intelligence from sources in Richmond, but he also received timely reports from local spies operating just across the Rappahannock from his headquarters in Falmouth. These spies were able to provide accurate information not only on enemy numbers but also on their locations and activity. Notable among them was Isaac Silver, a local citizen on the south side of the river with sympathies towards the Union.[20]

Isaac Silver was able to provide valuable information to Hooker up to the point that the battle began. Once the battle was underway, the challenges with collecting and reporting prohibited this network from remaining useful. This, coupled with the lack of cavalry, meant that once the battle of Chancellorsville began, Hooker was virtually blind to enemy activity.

While still in its infancy, signals intelligence or SigInt, was utilized to varying degrees of success throughout this period of the Civil War. During the Peninsula Campaign, the federal troops were able to break the primitive Confederate code and read their signal flags. The

usefulness of this technique was hampered, however, by the heavily wooded and flat terrain. Hooker had much more success with reading enemy signals at Chancellorsville due to the nature of the terrain and the fact that by this time in the war, his signalmen had more experience. At this point in the war, both sides had cracked the code of the other, but only the Union knew that their code had been cracked. Hooker used this to his advantage through the use of false messages to deceive the Confederate signalmen.[21]

The Civil War saw the advent of a new technology assisting with intelligence collection. Balloons were used frequently in the Army of the Potomac for aerial observation. The preeminent balloonist of the day was Professor Thaddeus Lowe. He was employed by the Army of the Potomac for a number of campaigns, including the Peninsula Campaign, 2nd Manassas, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. Like the signalmen, the value that the balloons provided was directly related to the terrain and the skill of the observers. Additionally, the balloons had to contend with the weather and they were very susceptible to the effects of strong wind and heavy fog.[22]

One of the limitations of the balloons was their mobility. They were only useful when the army was stationary. If terrain permitted, they could be moved short distances, as they were at Chancellorsville, but this was the exception, rather than the norm. Most of the time, once they ascended, they were stationary until they came back to earth. General Burnside was reluctant to use balloons at Fredericksburg because he thought that they gave away his intentions. Hooker use them extensively at Chancellorsville, although the information they provided once the battle began was of little value due to weather conditions and difficulties with dissemination of the information they reported. The skill of the observer was the key and often, commanders would go aloft themselves for a firsthand view of the battlefield. In the absence of a commander, the

best observer available was often professor Lowe himself.[23] A typical tasking to the balloons at the time is shown below:

> "The major-general commanding directs that one of your balloons proceeds to-night or before daybreak to-morrow to Banks Ford, or vicinity, and takes position to ascertain with regard to the force of the enemy between Fredericksburg, Bowling Green, and Banks Ford. A signal telegraph is working between here and Banks Ford, by which information can be communicated. It is especially desired to know the comparative strength of the enemy's force at Franklin's Crossing, and in the vicinity of Banks Ford, and above to the west of Fredericksburg."[24]

One of the advantages of the balloons was their responsiveness to tasking. A balloon was capable of ascending and reporting in about an hour.[25] Next to the signalmen, this was the most responsive collection asset of the time. A typical report from the balloons, when they were not prohibited from observation due to weather limitations, is shown here:

> "I can see no earth-works on the Bowling Green road. I should judge that the guns had been taken from the earth-works to the right of Fredericksburg. Another train of wagons is moving to the right on a road about one mile from beyond the heights opposite Franklin's Crossing. The enemy's barracks opposite Banks Ford are entirely deserted. The largest column of the enemy is moving on the road toward Chancellorsville. The enemy on the opposite heights I judge considerably diminished. Can see no change under the heights and in the rifle pits. I can see no diminution in the enemy's tents."[26]

This report highlights some of the benefits and challenges in using balloons as a collection asset. They could, under permissible weather conditions and with a competent observer, provide the commander with a relatively accurate picture of the enemy situation within their field of view. Getting more accurate information than that provided in the above example was rare. The key factor in the quality of the reports provided from the balloons was the skill of the observer. Professor Lowe would often ascend in the balloons himself to gain a better appreciation of the enemy situation and provide reports from an experienced observer.[27]

Intelligence Analysis

All-source analysis was another term that was not en vogue at the time of the Civil War. Even though the term was not used, it did take place. General McClellan served as a one man all-source fusion center. He received reports from cavalry, Pinkerton and his small spy network, balloons, interrogations, newspapers and signal intercepts and conducted his own analysis of the information he was receiving. As the volume of reports increased, so too did the amount of work McClellan had to do to make any sense of it. He did not have an intelligence staff or even an intelligence officer to do the analysis for him. The reasons for this remain unclear, but at that time, no one had an intelligence staff, not just McClellan. The concept of all source analysis was not to be discovered until 1863 under General Hooker.[28]

McClellan's method for analyzing his reports usually consisted of putting his own adjustments onto the enemy strength reports that he received from Pinkerton. If Pinkerton told him that he was facing 135,000 forces at Antietam, McClellan told Washington that he was facing 150,000. The inflated reporting not only confounded his superiors in Washington, but McClellan acted as if he believed the reports that he was sending. His letters home to his wife reveal that he believed he was correctly estimating the enemy strength. Part of his problem was his assumption that there must be unidentified brigades that were not counted. These mystery brigades were inserted by McClellan into his estimates even after Pinkerton had done the same thing in his enemy strength summaries. The result of this double counting of non-existent units was vastly over-exaggerated enemy strength reports that invariably led McClellan to request more troops, more supplies, and most vexing to his superiors, more time.[29]

A commander is ultimately responsible for intelligence along with every other warfighting function, but McClellan took this too far by trying to do everything himself.

McClellan had a remarkably successful career up to the time of Antietam. His rapid rise through the ranks may have ingrained in his mind that he was the only one capable of doing things correctly. He did not trust anyone else to tell him what the enemy was doing because no one else was as capable as he was. The result was intelligence that was sometimes timely, usually relevant, but rarely accurate.

His successor at the helm of the Army of the Potomac, General Burnside, made few, if any, contributions to the field of intelligence analysis during his short tenure. Like McClellan, he also did not establish a formal organization to handle intelligence operations. The result was that he went into the battle of Fredericksburg with a limited understanding of the enemy situation and he stumbled into one of the most lopsided defeats of the entire war.[30]

Upon assuming command in 1863, Hooker rapidly established the nation's first dedicated intelligence organization, the Bureau of Military Information (BMI).[31] Hooker took the remnants of the Pinkerton detective agency, gave it leadership in the person of Colonel Sharpe , and tasked them with coordinating all intelligence operations in the Army of the Potomac. In the organizational structure of the army, they fell under the administrative control of General Patrick in the Provost Marshall's office, but for all intents and purposes, they reported directly to Hooker and his Chief of Staff, General Butterfield.[32]

Colonel Sharpe began his army career in the 20th New York Militia and then as a regimental commander with the 120th New York Volunteers. He was a well connected lawyer prior to the war and his connections enabled him to gain a regimental command early on in the war. Even prior to his appointment to head the BMI he had an interest in intelligence. He used this genuine interest in intelligence along with the organizational and analytical skills he acquired as a lawyer to rapidly organize and commence the BMI operations.[33] One of the most

important decisions he made early on at the helm of the BMI was keeping Private Babcock in the service of the Army of the Potomac when the rest of Pinkerton's agency left.

Private Babcock was the only member of Pinkerton's organization to remain in the service of the Army of the Potomac after Pinkerton departed. He had served with Pinkerton early on in the Civil War. He was skilled as a mapmaker and by the time he began working for the BMI he was widely recognized as one of the best mapmakers in the army. His value to the BMI went beyond his mapmaking skills. As an employee of Pinkerton's, Babcock had extensive knowledge of the organization of the Army of Northern Virginia. When he began working for the BMI he was able to use this knowledge to great effect.[34]

The reasons that Hooker decided to establish the BMI are not entirely clear but there are several contributing factors that may have played a role in his decision. As a young military officer in the Mexican war, he worked for several political generals who gave him much greater responsibility than other officers of his similar rank. While there, he gained an appreciation at an early age for the vast responsibilities of a general in battle and learned that he needed to delegate some of the staff responsibilities. Secondly, while working under McClellan in the defense of the Washington DC area, Hooker was in command of a division that was operating independently from the rest of the command. As such, he was required to collect and analyze his own information on the enemy situation. [35] And finally, Hooker had served under Burnside during the ill-fated Fredericksburg battle. From that position, he witnessed firsthand the disasters that can befall a leader who does not place a premium on intelligence operations.[36]

The BMI was involved in all stages of the intelligence cycle and coordinated collection operations in all of the areas previously mentioned. The work of the BMI meant that Hooker received finished intelligence reports that took a number of sources into consideration and

allowed him to make decisions based on corroborated, accurate information. One of the most dramatic improvements was in the area of enemy strength reports. Whereas under McClellan, these estimates were wildly exaggerated, under Col Sharpe and the BMI, they were exceptionally accurate. Not only did the reports the BMI produced contain enemy numbers, they also reported on enemy locations.[37]

Another key area the BMI improved was interrogations. Now that there was a single unit assigned to do interrogations, they could be conducted by trained interrogators with knowledge of the enemy. John Babcock was the lead interrogator in the BMI. His extensive knowledge of the order of battle of the Army of Northern Virginia allowed him to conduct more effective interrogations and determine the validity of the statements he received. He combined the interrogation reports with those he received from scouts and spies to produce accurate all-source intelligence summaries for the commander. The BMI effectively integrated all areas of collection with one notable exception, the cavalry. The corps commander for the cavalry reported to the army commander, not the BMI. This created a seam in intelligence integration that was never rectified during the war. The cavalry had a long tradition of operating independently and this may have influenced how they viewed the new intelligence agency.

When Meade took over the Army of the Potomac shortly before the battle of Gettysburg in June of 1863, he had the advantage of inheriting an existing intelligence organization that had been operating effectively for several months already. One of his challenges was to rapidly assimilate the evolving enemy situation. With both armies on the move, he no longer had the advantages of aerial observation from balloons or a steady supply of enemy deserters. Meade had to rely on his cavalry and a burgeoning spy network to help with his understanding of the enemy disposition.

On the night of 2 July, 1863, the night prior to the Confederate assault at Gettysburg that has come to be known as Pickett's Charge, General Meade held a meeting with his senior commanders and some of his staff. One of the questions that he wanted addressed was whether his commanders believed they should stay on the field of battle and fight another day, or leave and regroup. On this subject, General Meade received valuable intelligence from Col Sharpe on the status of Army of Northern Virginia.

Col Sharpe reported that General Lee had committed all of his forces with the exception of Pickett's division and that reinforcements were not coming for the Confederates. Col Sharpe was able to obtain most of this information from prisoners taken during the battle and rapidly interrogated on the scene. Because of the excellent work that the BMI had done prior to this battle in analyzing every detail of the order of battle of the Army of Northern Virginia, Col Sharpe was able to identify definitively which units had been engaged and their estimated strength remaining. Armed with this crucial intelligence, and the confident support of his corps commanders, General Meade opted to remain on the commanding positions atop Cemetery Ridge for one more day. The result was one of the most devastating defeats General Lee suffered throughout the entire Civil War.[38]

Utilization / Operations – Intelligence Integration

McClellan was consistently lacking in his ability to integrate intelligence and operations. Part of his problem was that he relied too much on himself to provide his own intelligence analysis. Additionally, he never had accurate information on the enemy situation with which to plan his operations. A classic example of the problem McClellan had with integrating intelligence and operations was the situation surrounding the Lost Order leading up to the battle of Antietam.

The Lost Order was perhaps the single greatest intelligence find of the entire Civil War, yet McClellan was not able to turn it into success on the battlefield. The order was found by two soldiers in a field where Confederate forces had recently camped. Its significance was immediately realized by the soldiers and it was rapidly passed up the chain of command.[39] The order in essence gave McClellan Lee's plan to capture Harper's Ferry. With the information contained in the order, McClellan knew that Lee's army was split into several isolated elements and he had a golden opportunity to attack Lee's forces and perhaps defeat them in detail.

The problem for McClellan was that he was receiving information from other sources that contradicted some of the information in the order. He had no methodology established for analyzing the various reports and piecing together a coherent picture. The result was that McClellan acted slowly and was not able to mass his forces fast enough to attack Lee while he was at his weakest. Antietam devolved into a slow, methodical attack against a numerically inferior force instead of a massive assault against Lee's disparate elements. McClellan squandered one of the greatest intelligence coups of the war because he did not have a system set up that allowed him to synthesize reporting from multiple sources.[40] If McClellan had established such a system, the bloodiest day in American history may have been avoided.

Burnside was no better at intelligence driven operations than McClellan. Prior to the battle of Fredericksburg, he received reports on the formidable defenses at Marye's Heights yet he chose that location as the site of his multiple attacks. He either did not give the reports enough validity, or he felt that there was not enough time to change his plans. Either way, one of the most lopsided engagements of the Civil War could have been avoided had Burnside given some additional thought and consideration to how he was going to integrate his intelligence into his operational planning.[41]

Hooker had a better understanding of the link between operations and intelligence, but he was not able to convert it into battlefield success. At Chancellorsville, he had a remarkably clear picture of the enemy prior to the commencement of the battle. He knew who he was facing, where they were and, for the most part, what they were doing. However, once he crossed the Rappahannock River, with his cavalry far to the south and the fog obscuring the views of his signalmen and balloonists, his picture of the enemy rapidly deteriorated. He was able to integrate intelligence into his planning for the operation, but he was not able to sustain the intelligence operations once the battle began.

His intelligence reports did not dry up completely during the battle, but due to a number of contributing factors, including timeliness and conflicting reports, he misinterpreted the move of Jackson's corps to his western flank and became victim to one of the biggest routs of the entire Civil War. This failure may have been avoided with a few simple changes to his intelligence operations including holding more cavalry back during the operation to guard his flanks and rear areas.[42]

An additional contributing factor to this intelligence and operations breakdown was the expectations of the corps commander on the exposed western flank. General Howard expected intelligence to flow from top to bottom, not from bottom to top. When he began receiving reports from his pickets that there were enemy forces to his flank, he discounted them because they conflicted with the information he had received from higher headquarters.[43]

One of the key historic takeaways from this engagement is that once a battle begins, subordinate units, the ones in contact, must be trained and practiced in accurately reporting combat information. Intelligence is often bountiful prior to the commencement of hostilities, but once the bullets begin to fly, the majority of the useful information comes from the units in

contact. Howard expected to continue to receive intelligence from higher. When it came, he believed it as though it was gospel and he ignored his best intelligence sources at the time, his own men.

For the intelligence cycle stage of utilization to be successful, one of the keys is the need for effective feedback from the intelligence customer to the intelligence collectors and analysts. In most cases in the period covered in this paper, the customers were the Army and Corps commanders. The feedback guides the collector in another direction if they are collecting insignificant information or lets them know that what they are collecting is being used to good effect. Feedback could have been provided from General McClellan to Pinkerton letting him know that his efforts in Richmond were of little value and he should focus his limited assets on the Army of Northern Virginia instead.

Quality feedback also allows the intelligence analyst to tailor their products to the specific needs of the commander. In the case of General Hooker at Chancellorsville, he provided Col Sharpe with detailed feedback on the type of intelligence he needed and as a result, he received detailed, all-source reports that contained all of the information that he was looking for. See Appendix 1 for a sample BMI report that Hooker received at Chancellorsville.

Conclusion

This paper began with an examination of intelligence under the direction of General McClellan and followed its development through the command of Meade at Gettysburg. The period of July 1861 through July 1863 saw many changes in the way the Army of the Potomac conducted intelligence operations. Some improvements were significant and had a direct effect on operational effectiveness; others were less important and disappeared along with the general that ushered them in. By far the most significant of all advancements in the intelligence field was

the creation of the BMI by General Hooker. Although it was a short-lived agency that did not last to the end of the war, its contributions were long lasting.

Following the reign of Hooker at the helm of the Army of the Potomac, the BMI was restructured under Meade and again by Grant. Meade viewed intelligence in much the same way as McClellan in that he was more inclined to serve as his own all-source analysis center. Sharpe continued to provide intelligence reporting, but not the same all source variety that he had under Hooker. Under General Grant, the BMI became known as the Bureau of Information and resumed its all-source analysis role, although under a convoluted chain of command created by the dual headquarters of Meade and Grant working in close proximity to each other.

The challenge of integrating cavalry into intelligence operations is a problem that persists to this day with the tasking of reconnaissance units. This is a challenge even today with robust staffs trained for years in intelligence operations. During the Civil War, when most commanders acted as their own intelligence officer, the challenge was even more daunting. Nevertheless, General Hooker severely handicapped himself when he sent nearly all of his cavalry south on a daring raid that amounted to nothing when Stoneman completely failed in his mission.

Intelligence is a function of command and the failures of Civil War intelligence were command failures. Despite all of the contributions that General Hooker made to the field of intelligence, he was never able to translate those into success on the battlefield. While history has determined his legacy to be that of a commander who let victory slip through his hands at Chancellorsville, his innovations in the field of military intelligence should not be overlooked.

A few insights can be derived from the brief period of Civil War intelligence history examined in this paper. First, the need to have a good reporting plan during contact is paramount. Before the battle begins, there is usually ample intelligence coming from higher headquarters

staffs. Once a battle is underway, the best source of intelligence is the units in contact. Without a good reporting plan, none of this information will reach higher and adjacent units. Half of command and control is the feedback that is provided to the commander from his subordinate units.[44] Without this feedback loop working properly, the commander is effectively blind to what is taking place during the battle and rendered unable to command his forces. Contemporary commanders have tremendous advantages in terms of communication assets over Civil War era counterparts, but the details of effective combat reporting remain challenging to implement. The key is planning, redundancy and rehearsals. This was done poorly throughout the Civil War and is carried out effectively today only through detailed planning.

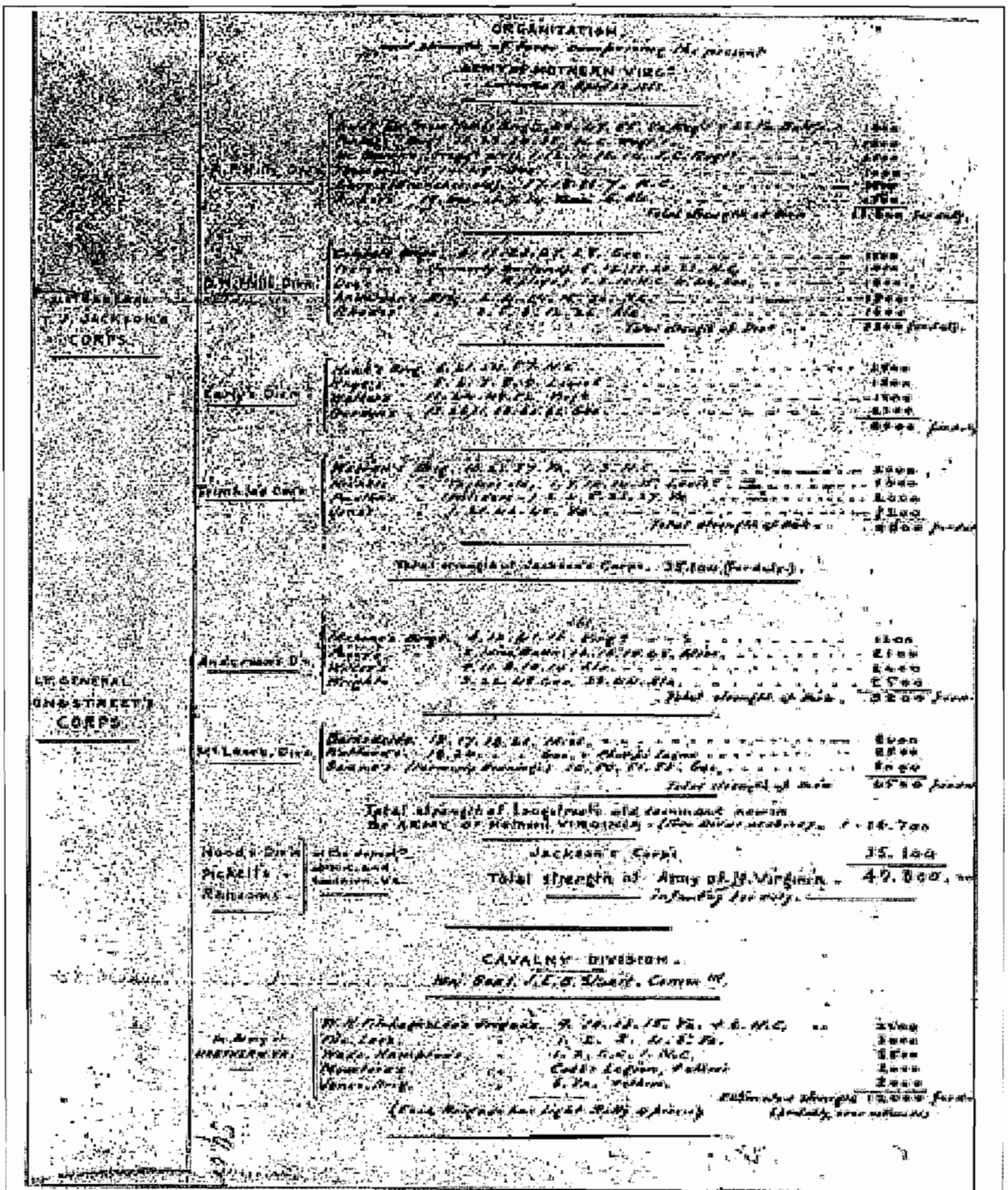
A second insight is the need for balance between using reconnaissance assets as a collection asset or a fire support asset. This is something that if it is planned well, a unit does not have to make a choice between the two missions. A good reconnaissance asset, whether it be a Scout Sniper team, a Reconnaissance team or an organic asset in an infantry company, can do both if planned for correctly. With the communication assets that are available today, performing both types of mission is significantly easier than during the Civil War.

Third, the need for the commander's involvement in the intelligence process is paramount. There is really no such thing as intelligence failures, just failed operations. The converse is also true. The commander is responsible for everything that his command does or fails to do, including intelligence. To be a successful commander, he must be intimately involved in the entire intelligence process from beginning to end. This can be taken to extremes if the commander is not comfortable with intelligence. In the case of McClellan and Meade, the extreme was in trying do everything intelligence related on their own. In the case of Burnside, the extreme was in doing virtually nothing with intelligence.

Fourth, the need for redundant means of disseminating intelligence must be taken seriously, as without this link, all other successful intelligence efforts could be for naught. Chancellorsville provides a good example of this point. Once the battle was underway, the critical move of the entire day was Jackson's move to the western flank of the Union lines. This move was detected on several occasions, but was not disseminated to those who needed it. General Howard on the western flank received bits and pieces of information but never the entire picture of what he was about to encounter. The beginning of the Gulf War is another good modern day example of the bottom up reporting drying up once the battle began. Dissemination and reporting plans must take into account this critical phase of the battle. Once the first shots are fired, the units in contact become the best intelligence assets and they must have a plan to report the information they have to higher and adjacent units.

Throughout the period examined in this paper, several significant improvements were made to the overall intelligence capabilities of the Union's Army of the Potomac. These improvements ranged from organizational to procedural to technological. While some of these improvements dramatically improved the commander's understanding of the terrain and the enemy situation, they were not frequently translated into successes on the battlefield. Chancellorsville is the most glaring example of tremendous improvements in intelligence not tied to a victory in battle. Perhaps the most significant Union victory of the entire Civil War, Gettysburg was achieved without any significant improvements to the army's intelligence apparatus. Meade was, however, able to successfully integrate his operations with the intelligence he received better than any previous Union commander.

Appendix 1: Example BMI Report



"The order of battle chart of Lee's army drawn up by John Babcock on April 28, 1863, on the day Hooker crossed the upper Rappahannock en route to Chancellorsville. Note the figures for infantry (49,000) and cavalry (12,000); the total, 61,800 was very close to the Confederates' actual numbers." [45]

Notes

[1] McCullough, D. *1776* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 28.
Allen, T. *George Washington, Spymaster* (United States: National Geographic, 2004).
[2] Sun Tzu. *The Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963)
[3] Fishel, Edwin. *The Secret War for the Union*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 8-9.
[4] Fishel. 294.
[5] According to MCRP 5-12a, In Marine Corps usage, intelligence is knowledge about the enemy or the surrounding environment needed to support decision making. This knowledge is the result of the collection, processing, exploitation, evaluation, integration, analysis, and interpretation of available information about the battlespace and threat.
[6] Marine Corps intelligence doctrine includes Analysis under the stage of Production.
[7] Headquarters Marine Corps. *MCDP-2: Intelligence*. (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 1996), 59-64.
[8] MCDP-2. 38-42.
[9] MCDP-2. 55-57.
[10] Fishel. 8, 55, 298
[11] United States War Department. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilitation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series 1- Volume 11. 8-9.
[12] McClellan, George. *McClellan's Own Story*. (New York: Charles Webster and Company, 1887), 253.
[13] McClellan. 484-598; Sears. *Landscape Turned Red*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 263-264.
[14] Sears. *Chancellsorville*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); & Fishel . 281-282.
[15] Sears. *Gettysburg*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 143-144, 159.
[16] Sears. *Chancellorsville*. 290, 427 & Sears. *Gettysburg*. 83, 87, 97.
[17] Sears. *Gettysburg*. 143-144.
[18] Fishel. 53-55.
[19] Fishel. 102-129.
[20] Fishel. 360-362.
[21] Fishel. 347-348.
[22] OR 3-3. 314 & 316.
[23] OR 3-3. 252-318.
[24] OR 3-3. 310.
[25] OR 3-3. 314.
[26] OR 3-3. 313.
[27] OR 3-3. 310-318.
[28] Fishel. 1-4.
[29] Fishel. 579-587.
[30] Fishel. 260-262.
[31] Luvaas, Jay & Nelson, Harold. *Guide to the Battle of Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg*. (Lawrence, Kansas: Univesity of Kansas Press, 1994), 300.
[32] Fishel. 282.
[33] Fishel. 288-291.
[34] Fishel. 153-154.
[35] Herbert, Walter H. *Fighting Joe Hooker*. (Lincoln Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1999) 26-35 & 55-73.
[36] Foote, Shelby. *The Civil War Narrative: Fredericksburg to Meridian*. (New York: Random House, 1963) 20-45.
[37] Fishel. 298-300.
[38] Markle, Donald. *Spies and Spymasters of the Civil War*. (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1994) 14
[39] *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War: North to Antietam*. 603.
[40] Fishel. 222-223.
[41] Foote. 20-45.
[42] Stackpole, Edward. *Chancellorsville*. (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1958) 140-151 & 212-216.

[43] Loncare, Edward. *The Commanders of Chancellorsville: The Gentleman Versus the Rogue.* (Nashville, Tennessee: Rutledge Hill Press, 2005) 204-207. & Stackpole. 219-227.

[44] Headquarters Marine Corps. *MCDP-6: Command and Control.* (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 1996), 40.

[45] Fishel. Last page of pictures between pages 368 and 369.

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